

Appl. No. 10/539,895
 Reply to Office Action of August 8, 2008
 Attorney Docket 18064

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-14 are currently pending for examination. Claims 1 and 8 are currently amended claim 14 was added. No new matter has been added.

Rejection of Claims under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1 – 7 were rejected by the previous Office Action under 35 U.S.C. §103 as obvious in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,580,811 to Whykhuis.

Claim 1 recites a road grader having a combined bumper and rear counterweight comprised of a generally flat elongate rear end plate with two configurations that mounts to the rear end of the frame of the grader. In a first configuration the rear end plate exhibits a small wall thickness in use with a rear-mounted piece of equipment of a high weight. In a second configuration a rear end plate exhibits a greater wall thickness in use with a rear-mounted piece of equipment of a low weight or without any rear-mounted equipment. This may provide an improved axle load distribution such that the same loading is generally maintained at the rear of the vehicle.

In contrast, Wykhuis discloses a rear counterweight assembly for a vehicle with an implement mounted to its forward end, wherein the counterweight is incorporated into the rear bumper assembly and includes counter rectangular weights having notched lower edges that can be received on bumper mounting rods which are received in holes in the rear of the vehicle. The ends of the rods inserted into the frame are threaded so that they can be secured by nuts on the inner side of the frame. While the counterweight of Wykhuis can be increased, the reference does not disclose altering the thickness of a rear plate that acts as both the counterweight and bumper in relation to the presence and weight of an attached towed rear implement to maintain the optimum axle load distribution between the front wheels and a tandem rear axle. Wykhuis further does not disclose that a towed implement can be attached to the rear of the vehicle only that it is adapted for mounting an implement on the forward end. Wykhuis therefore not does not disclose or suggest all of the elements of claim 1.

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Claims 2-7 depends directly from claim 1 and is allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 1. Accordingly, allowance of claims 1-7 is respectfully requested.

Claim 2 is further separately patentable as it recites that the rear end plate which comprises both the bumper and the rear counterweight is one piece. Alternatively, Wykhuis discloses a bumper section (30) that is separate from the removable counter weights (52) that the bumper retains such that the counter weight assembly is formed from multiples pieces. The counterweights can also be replaced additional spacers sections as shown in Fig. 2 of Wykhuis, which adds additional complexity to the design.

Claims 8-10 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as obvious in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,853,231 to Luttrell.

Claim 8 recites a road grader having a generally flat elongate rear end plate jointed to the rear end of frame. The rear end plate constitutes the rearmost part of the rear frame and extending generally the width of the road grader. The rear end plate further has apertures to improve the travel of components of rear-mounted equipment mounted to the frame of the grader through a portion of the plate. Additionally, the generally elongate rear end plate has a small wall thickness when rear mounted equipment is installed.

In contrast, Luttrell discloses a work vehicle having a ground engaging blade and a rear counterweight that is removably insertable into an opening in the vehicle frame. A second counter weight can then be secured over the opening which houses the first counter weight by fasteners. Luttrell discloses a lug and retaining pin for attaching an implement for towing portions but is not recessed for permitting the travel of a trailed implement attached to the vehicle. Luttrell further does not disclose or suggest mounting a thinner rear plate based on the weight of a towed rear implement to improve the axle load distribution. Luttrell therefore not does not disclose or suggest all of the elements of claim 1.

Claims 9 and 10 depend either directly or indirectly from claim 8 and are allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 8. Accordingly, allowance of claims

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8-10 is respectfully requested.

Claim 13 is separately patentable since Luttrell as discussed with respect to Claim 1, does not disclose a bumper and counterweight having multiple configurations based on the presence /weight of a rear implement mounted in close proximity for axle loading distribution purposes.

Claim 11 was rejected by the previous Office Action under 35 U.S.C. §103 as obvious in view of Luttrell in further view of Wykhuis.

Claim 11 depend directly from claim 8 and is allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 8.

Claim 12 was rejected by the previous Office Action under 35 U.S.C. §103 as obvious in view of Luttrell in further view of Wykhuis and U.S. Patent 3,490,787 to Latterman

Claim 12 depends from claim 8 and is allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 8.

New Claim 14

Claim 14 was added reciting a method for using at least two rear end plates dependent upon the presence and/or weight of equipment also connected at a similar location on the grader. As discussed above neither Luttrell nor Wykhuis disclose altering the thickness of a rear end plate, which serves as a counterweight and a bumper based on an attached implement. As claim 14 is not disclosed or suggested by the prior art, a notice of allowance is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

It is submitted that claims 1-14 define patentable subject matter. A Notice of Allowance is therefore respectfully requested

No fee is believed due with this communication. Nevertheless, should the Examiner consider any fees to be payable in conjunction with this or any future communication, authorization is given to direct payment of such fees, or credit any

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overpayment to Deposit Account No. 14-0780. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it would help expedite matters.

Respectfully submitted,



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